

**Westport School Committee  
Budget Work Session  
DATE: Tuesday, May 21, 2024  
TIME: 4:00 p.m.  
PLACE: Virtual via Zoom**

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87639325125?pwd=RjNHMmxyaGlod1pWVWFpMFZ0a21nQT09>

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Webinar ID: 876 3932 5125 Passcode: 938153

**MINUTES**

**Members Present:** Gloria Cabral, Evan Gendreau, Jason Pacheco, Melissa Pacheco, Christopher Thrasher

**Others Present:** Thomas Aubin Westport Community Schools Superintendent, Lisa Kaminski Director of Curriculum Instruction and Professional Development, Lori Melo Administrative Secretary, Michelle Rapoza School Business Manager

**I. Call to order** - Chair Evan Gendreau called the Virtual Budget Work Session to order with a quorum of the members present at 4:09 pm. using the Zoom platform.

Chair Gendreau read the following:

On March 29, 2023, Governor Maura Healey signed into law Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, which includes a two-year extension of the option for public bodies to hold remote meetings, effective immediately. This legislation simply extends the current option for remote meetings through March 31, 2025, and does not otherwise affect the ability of public bodies to conduct their meetings remotely through video and/or audio conferencing under Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021.

**II. Discussion of FY25 School Budget** - Chair Gendreau informed everyone the Business Department looked at the budget and made 6 recommendations to offset a deficit of \$446,361 as follows:

New 3-year transportation contract	\$145,000
Closure of old High School	\$ 90,373
Teacher and 2 TA	\$133,748
Custodian charged to food service	\$ 42,000
New MAC secretary savings	\$ 5,000
Summer school closing MS.	\$ 4,240
Summer school closing WES	\$ 18,000
Summer school closing MAC.	\$ 8,000

Chair Gendreau noted that Mr. Hartnett sent a communication asking the committee to give details on moving out of the old high school.

Chair Gendreau opened discussion for committee members on the \$446,361 in cuts.

Discussion took place on moving out of the old high school.

Ms. Rapoza shared the cost to maintain fields at the old high school is budgeted in the FY25 budget.

Chair Gendreau shared that support from administration would be given if admin moves into the other schools.

Ms. Rapoza reported they have looked at where everyone would go and how much room in the spaces. Chair Gendreau asked if all staff are on board with the move out? Ms. Rapoza said most are except the

Business Office. Their new space can bring 3 people and file cabinets but not filing cabinets held downstairs.

Ms. Rapoza shared the Out of School Time Program can fit into another space. The biggest problem is finding space for filing cabinets.

Ms. Kaminski shared administration presence at the other schools will enhance accountability, safety, and security.

Mr. Thrasher has concerns on the logistics of a move for example IT equipment, Business Office equipment. Code regulations or upgrades may be needed depending on who moves in. What type of expenditures will be incurred with the move itself? What does it take to get everything out of there?

Ms. Rapoza shared there are concerns with leaving any department behind at the old school. They have used the old high school for storage and need to look at alternatives such as renting a pod or using the building at the campgrounds. The move can be organized with the Sheriff's Office. Question on whether to keep the Internet is being explored. Ms. Rapoza will give an update at the next SC meeting.

Chair Gendreau reminded everyone going into FY26 the issue of free cash will happen.

Chair Gendreau asked if there were any other items members would like to discuss in resolution of the deficit?

Mr. Pacheco shared his concern with the fields for athletics. If the School Department moves out and the Town takes over he would like a guarantee from the Town about the fields. The cost to rent other locations for athletics, student transportation, etc. would be very costly for the price of saving \$90,000 may not be worth it.

Chair Gendreau mentioned the fields issue should be included in all communications from the committee.

Ms. Rapoza suggested that the School Committee make an agreement with the Town that spells out all the specifics and prioritizes the fields for school use in lieu of continuing to maintain and upkeep the lawn.

Chair Gendreau requested for Ms. Melo to add to the next SC agenda to discuss these items.

Chair Gendreau requested for Ms. Rapoza to send recommendations to the committee.

Chair Gendreau mentioned the goal in making these cuts is to minimize the teacher impact and to have less impact affecting the classrooms in order to achieve the best experience for our students. The deficit resolutions reflect the goal of the committee.

Chair Gendreau asked if there were any further items solving the deficit to discuss?

Mr. Pacheco questioned some increases in certain line items including legal fees.

Ms. Rapoza explained the Director of Human Resources part time person was coming out of ESSER funds and now comes out of the school budget. There was only 1 faculty Science Teacher previously funded by ESSER. Legal fees in past years could have decreased because of COVID. This budget line has fluctuated over the years. There will be an increase in legal when it is a contractual year. Ms. Rapoza will do further research on legal fees.

Mr. Aubin shared there have been increases in legal services due to Special Education circumstances.

Mr. Pacheco mentioned he is looking for clarification on the Start Em Young Program. He mentioned this is as costly as the summer programs and wondered if the Start Em Young Program could be replaced with school clubs instead. Flag football and robotics were mentioned to do as clubs.

Ms. Rapoza mentioned Start Em Young was previously funded by ESSER and this year was the first time it was in the regular budget and will be again in next year's budget.

Ms. Pacheco explained that the Start Em Young Program began because there were no programs across the grades. This program has engaged all our schools and she is not in favor of taking this out. The program has been organized and very successful, adding the missing piece for the district.

Chair Gendreau noted that these items will come up again going into FY26 and will be discussed in early Fall and around October when meeting with the Finance Committee.

Chair Gendreau asked the committee if they agree with giving the Business Office the go ahead with their recommendations presented for the resolution of the deficit? There were no objections.

Chair Gendreau asked Ms. Melo to add the spend down of ESSER funds to the next SC agenda and asked Ms. Rapoza to prepare what will be spent for the committee.

**III. Adjourn** - A motion was made to adjourn.

Motion by Cabral, seconded by MPacheco

5/0/0

**Roll call vote:**

Cabral Yes Gendreau Yes JPacheco Yes MPacheco Yes Thrasher Yes

The Westport School Committee Virtual Budget Work Session ended at 5:09 pm.